Staff Memorandum

To	Mayor A. Nuttall, Deputy Mayor R. Thomson and Members of Council
Subject	2025 Poet Laureate Activities and Programming Report
Date	April 15, 2026
Ward	All
From	K. Datema, Director of Recreation and Culture Services
Executive Member Approval	J. Schmidt, General Manager Community & Corporate Services
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer

The purpose of this Memorandum is to share an overview of the activities and programming undertaken by the current Poet Laureate, Tyneisha Thomas, in 2025.

Background:

In November 2022, the current Poet Laureate, Tyneisha Thomas, was chosen to serve as the 2022-2026 Poet Laureate.

Role of the Poet Laureate:

The role of the Poet Laureate is to raise the profile of the literary arts by:

- Writing and publishing poetry
- Performing poetry
- Educating the public on the value of poetry and the literary arts
- Encouraging and celebrating other local poets and writers
- Promoting literacy in all age groups

2025 Poet Laureate Activity Summary:

In alignment with Council direction, the following outlines the activities carried out by Tyneisha Thomas as Poet Laureate in 2025:

- Hosted her inaugural annual Poet Laureate event on March 1st, celebrating Black History Month and the contributions of Black artists to the Canadian cultural landscape. The event was hosted in partnership with the Provincial Poet Laureate, Matthew-Ray Jones, aka Testament at Bloom Bistro, engaging 25 hired artists, and saw an attendance of over 100 people.

- Collaborated with Lyrica Choir and composer Frank Hozart to create the lyrics for Lyrica's 25th anniversary production.
- Read a new poem "Family" at Barrie City Council in recognition of National Poetry Month in April.
- Hosted and performed at the RVH Staff Poetry event for National Poetry Month.
- Participated for the second time as a judge for the City of Orillia's K. Valerie Conner Poetry Competition.
- Created and performed a new poem for the community organization Barrie Pride at their annual march and event.
- Created a special spoken word poetry video that was showcased at the 2025 Barrie Arts Awards.
- Created and read a new poem for Empower Simcoe's AGM.
- Was awarded Barrie Today's Community Builder Award for the Arts 2025.
- Was named one of Canada's Top Black Women to Watch 2025 by Canada International Black Women Excellence.

Looking forward to 2026:

On Wednesday, April 15th, Tyneisha will return to Barrie City Council to read a new poem for National Poetry Month.

Tyneisha will also be hosting a special reading by the former Canadian Poet Laureate, George Elliott Clarke and the current Poet Laureate of Ontario, Matthew Ray-Jones, aka Testament on Saturday, April 18th from 2:00 to 4:30 PM at the Barrie Public Library, to align with National Poetry Month.

As opportunities arise, staff will continue to identify and support additional ways to showcase the Poet Laureate program. To learn more about Tyneisha's Poet Laureate activities, visit www.barrie.ca/PoetLaureate.

Memo Author:

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File #:

Pending #:

Not Applicable